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MANAGING DANGER IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT, 1900–1940

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"Since the dawn of history, woman has been in charge of the home and has been responsible for it. This work of home safety is peculiarly woman's work."

Arvilla Miller, *General Federation of Women's Clubs*, 1929

Introduction

Where does environmental risk reside? Obviously danger is found not only in our ambient surroundings but also within the home itself. Anthropologist Mary Douglas has written about how environmental risk perceptions reflect a set of deeper concerns about social dangers, and can provide insights into contemporary social values and structures. Degrees of risk and frequency of accident occurrence are intimately intertwined, but both the perception of danger and its causes, as well as the responsibility for controlling or reducing it, have shifted over time. Increasingly, in the twentieth century, as the home was viewed less as a "haven" and more as a place where danger might reside, society held women most responsible for guaranteeing its safety. The examination of home accidents and of the movement for home safety, therefore, can help enlighten our understanding of social change, including our perception of the redefinition of the home and gender roles within it.¹

In a recent and challenging article, Maureen Flanagan has showed how Chicago women extrapolated lessons about improving the larger urban environment from their attempts to make their home environments more livable. They utilized an image, she writes, of the city as a "shared home." Their larger goal was to produce the "city livable"—a city that emphasized "cleanliness, health, safety, and protecting and preserving the environment for common use and common good." Achievement of the "city livable," she adds, was a sharply different goal from that of male reformers, who saw the city primarily as a business to be improved by "technology, efficiency, and professional expertise."²

In this article we invert Flanagan's thesis and discuss how gender and risk perceptions helped structure considerations of accidents within the home environment rather than without. We explore how the larger safety organizations, as well as women themselves in the home economics movement, adopted what Flanagan calls the male values of "technology, efficiency, and professional expertise" in an attempt to control home accidents and create a culture of safety.³ In the process of exploring these American patterns, we will examine the transition from home-as-haven to home-as-dangerous-place and the attempt to formulate a culture of home safety. In particular, we focus on the development of the home safety movement centering around the notion of women as home safety managers.

The Home as Haven

Since the Victorian period, society has identified the home as a “haven” from a ruthless and chaotic world, and women as the home-makers and keepers of the haven, ruling over the domestic environment.⁴ Linked in with the concept of the home as haven was the idea of the home as women’s “sphere.” Men might go off to labor in office and industry, but women would remain behind to raise families and to provide the emotional and physical support enabling men to operate in the ruthless and materialistic world of work. Women, it was argued, were “best suited, both biologically and emotionally” to provide stability against the shocks of the marketplace and the world of business, remaining in charge of family and of home.⁵

If the home was to furnish an ideal and peaceful environment, however, it had to be made safe—carefully organized, with dangerous materials and tools out of the reach of children and family members protected from hazards such as open fires and hot stoves. In order to prevent accidents, women had, as Catharine Beecher observed, to become “home managers,” making housework into a “scientific study” and utilizing the newest technology.⁶ Advice books about home sanitation, published in the late nineteenth century, also reflected women’s responsibility to keep the home sanctuary free from threats to health. “The men of the house come and go,” observed one sanitarian, while “the women are conversant with every nook of the dwelling, from basement to roof, and on their knowledge, wisdom, and skill the physician rests his hopes.” Sanitarians, health reformers, and sanitary “scientists” attempted to alert housewives to new dangers lurking in the home from faulty domestic plumbing—plumbing that could lead to the formation of “sewer gas” and “germs,” and the consequent outbreak of “house diseases.”⁷

Organized concern over home accidents, however, began as an offshoot of the push for industrial accident reduction rather than as an independent movement. At the turn of the century America had the highest work-related death rate of any industrialized nation.⁸ Several different factors drove the movement for improvement, including concern over the effect of accidents on industrial efficiency and state passage of workmen’s compensation laws that altered liability for workplace accidents. In addition, society was undergoing a change that made individuals increasingly intolerant of accepting injuries that they did not believe were their responsibility.⁹ Reflecting these developments, the National Safety Council (NSC) was organized in 1914 primarily to address the issue of industrial accidents; by 1917, it had 3,300 members.¹⁰

According to Arwen Mohun, the National Safety Council “was out to effect a cultural shift; to teach not only workers and employers but also the American public new ways of thinking about danger, risk, and safety.”¹¹ The NSC recognized home safety as an issue of concern at its first National Congress, as did its biweekly magazine, *National Safety News* (NSN). Home safety, however, held a much lower priority within the organization than did industrial safety. In fact, the initial focus of the NSC and its publications, as well as of the journal *Safety Engineering* (an insurance industry publication first issued in 1913), was for mothers to train their children to preach “accident prevention in the business and industrial world . . . [when they became] the workmen and the executives of

the future.”¹² By emphasizing the special responsibility of women to develop a safety consciousness in the family’s males as preparation for encountering workplace risk, the NSC and *Safety Engineering* minimized the extent to which risk was also present in the home, especially for women and children.¹³

The safety movement redefined the perception of home safety and of women’s role as it matured. The movement’s directors were ambivalent concerning the place of women in a field primarily oriented toward male-dominated industry, but they gradually accepted the idea that the home was also a place of risk in which women had special responsibilities.¹⁴ In 1917, for instance, *Safety Engineering* ran two editorials entitled, “Housewives and Home Hazards.” Focusing on the danger of fires, the writers bemoaned the fact that fire fighting was seen as a man’s job and noted that the “housewife’s responsibility should be considered . . . [since] housewives are the ones to prevent fires in the homes.” In 1918 the NSC organized a “Women’s Session” at its annual Safety Congress dealing with women’s industrial and home safety experiences alike. One male speaker noted the contradiction between the common view of the home as a “haven of safety” and its high accident rate. He emphasized women’s special responsibility to remove hazards and to prevent family members from taking risks. Even though “Women in War Industries” was a major session theme, NSC male spokesmen carefully emphasized that “safety in the home and safety instruction” were women’s special province.¹⁵ Women may have played a valuable wartime role, but their peacetime place was in the home.

In an attempt to expand women’s role in the safety movement, in 1919 Tracy Copp, chairperson of the NSC “Women in Industry Section,” led a move to have eighteen national women’s organizations join with the NSC in organizing public safety in the nation’s communities and schools. Copp noted,

Now that women have finished the war work in which they displayed such constant courage and skill, they are seeking some social task which is worthy of their ability and which will grip their interest as the war work did. We believe accident prevention offers this field of activity, and the toll of deaths among children alone should arouse every public spirited woman to action.¹⁶

An editorial accompanying the article commented that while “the women of the country . . . have played almost no part in this movement [the safety movement],” the time had come for it to spread from industry into the community and to enlist the “two great groups heretofore left untouched—the women in the homes and the children in the schools.”¹⁷

Home Economics and Home Safety

One route to involve women in the safety movement was through the profession of home economics. Developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (although it had earlier roots), home economics was intended to be a women’s domain that would provide co-equal professional status with men. The thrust of home economics was to train women to emphasize planning, system, and order in the home.¹⁸ Although the movement’s leaders differed on some elements of strategy, they agreed that the home and the larger society were intertwined. That is, the rhetoric of home economics moved away from

the separate sphere argument without relinquishing the concept that the home was women's domain. And, argued the movement's founders, in this domain women trained in the "science" of home economics would bring its principles to home management. Or, as Ellen H. Richards, the movement's pre-eminent leader noted, "HOME ECONOMICS STANDS FOR: The ideal home life for today unhampered by the traditions of the past. The utilization of all the resources of modern science to improve the home life."¹⁹ Thus, home economics, like other new professions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, relied upon scientific rationalism and the doctrine of efficiency to establish its authority.²⁰

As the home economics movement grew, a national structure evolved, beginning with the holding of the first Lake Placid, New York, Conference on Home Economics in 1899, and by the formation of the American Home Economics Association in 1908. With a largely female constituency that included high school teachers, journalists, and academics, the home economics movement spread rapidly throughout American society. By 1916, 17,778 students were enrolled in home economics courses at 195 colleges and universities; in addition, in 1917, another 27,000 students attended 450 home economics extension courses.²¹

The concept of "efficiency" strongly influenced the home economy movement during the century's first decades. The progressive era experienced an efficiency craze likened by historian Samuel Haber to a "secular Great Awakening."²² Many women believed that efficiency would emancipate them from the home's burdens and elevate them to a status of home scientific managers, putting home work on a par with men's work outside the home.²³ By the 1910s, Taylorist efficiency zeal and the nineteenth-century gender ideology of "separate spheres" had coalesced in the home economics movement to form a reform agenda that fitted with progressive efforts to create a more orderly society.²⁴

Given its emphasis on management and efficiency, the involvement of home economics in the home safety movement was natural. David E. Nye observes that home economics spokeswomen "sought to emulate in the home the work of engineers in the factory," reconceptualizing the home as a "management site controlled by women . . . a domestic factory that produced healthy and happy citizens."²⁵ Like any up-to-date factory, the modern home needed to be equipped with the latest in production technology: running water and sewerage, central heating, telephone service, and, most of all, electricity, to provide both light and power for various appliances such as vacuum cleaners, dish washing machines, washing machines, electric stoves, refrigerators, and toasters.

In order to publicize the link between home safety and home management, in 1929 the National Bureau of Casualty and Surety Underwriters offered a graduate fellowship of \$1,000 for a "study of home safety as an index of good home management."²⁶ The announcement noted that just as "efficiency" was linked to industrial and traffic safety, so would home safety prove to be a vital aspect of "a well-managed home." The fellowship could be used in a Ph.D. program in a university with a "properly qualified home economics department;" an advisory committee containing representatives of the American Home Economics Association, the NSC, and the National Organization for Public Health Nursing would furnish direction.²⁷

The first winner of the safety fellowship was Gertrude Zurrer of Chicago, who

chose to study at the University of Chicago under the direction of Edith Abbot, a former Hull House resident who had become a professor of social economy and dean at the university's School of Social Service Administration.²⁸ At the Nineteenth NSC Safety Congress, Zurrer discussed the rationale and plan for her study. She noted that the field lacked both statistics and research, but suggested a strong link between home accidents and social problems. "But we all know where perhaps most accidents happen. (That is just it-perhaps; we have no figures to show.)," she said. "It is where the woman must leave her children and go to the factory, or where she has a very large family, or where she is a foreigner. These women do not go to the clubs."²⁹ (Unfortunately, the printed record does not indicate whether Zurrer's last comment was intended as a slap at the women's club members who played a role in the home safety movement or was merely a factual observation.)

By the 1920s, however, home economics had diverged considerably from a social welfare orientation and had forged strong links with the new consumer-oriented economy.³⁰ Many home economists found corporate employment a natural step for women who described their profession as the "business of housekeeping" or the "profession of housework."³¹ Corporations, however, did not typically hire women as efficiency experts, but rather to help sell consumer goods and to assuage societal fears about new electrically-powered technologies. Women's business roles, therefore, usually related to the home and not to the factory. Home economists encouraged this division of labor, reconceptualizing the home in terms of Taylorism and as a center of consumption over which women had power.³²

Advocating that women exercise discretion and care in their household consumption, home economists allied with the rapidly developing consumer society. They broke with past traditions of household architecture that prized individual taste and style and suggested an alternative vision for middle-class homelife which emphasized planning, efficiency, and safety. Christine Frederick, whose books included *The New Housekeeping and Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home*, summed up the multifaceted role of the modern mother: "Today the woman in the home is called upon to be an executive as well as a manual laborer. Just to be a good worker and keep on working until you drop is not sufficient—or efficient either. The more planning, the more brains, the more management a woman puts into her housework, the less friction and the less nervous energy she will have to expend."³³ Heroic mother Lillian Gilbreth provided the model, advocating a home designed in a minimalist style and free of clutter to aid with mother's efficiency.³⁴ Thus, despite the belief that women could be professionals and scientific managers, the message of home economists was similar to that found in the writings of nineteenth-century pioneers like Catharine Beecher, oriented around the notion of the home as a place of perfectibility and social salvation.³⁵

The language of both the home economics movement and the home safety movement resides within debates about feminism in the early twentieth century. The two sides of the janus-face of feminism discovered by Nancy Cott appear strongly within both movements.³⁶ In the realm of home economics, spokespersons like Charlotte Perkins Gilman envisioned that women's housework would become an upgraded type of work done professionally in the home. She ar-

gued that the rationalization and removal of many domestic chores from the home would free women from the burdens of domesticity and allow the home to be run more efficiently.³⁷ The dominant strand of home economics therefore retained the conceptualization of the home as woman's domain, even if professionally managed. The rhetoric of the home safety movement resembles this strain most closely. Safety experts argued that women should manage the home from their position within it. They did not discard the notion of domesticity; rather, they supplemented it with the professional ethos of the newly emerging and consumer-oriented middle class.

Home Accidents and Technology: the Case of Electricity

As consciousness of home hazards penetrated the safety community in the 1920s, various "experts" and spokespeople attempted to specify the risks and to explore how they might be mitigated. Fires and falls were always matters of concern, with speakers at NSC Safety Congresses and safety articles assigning housewives the primary responsibility for reducing their occurrence. In regard to fire, for instance, it was the housewives' task to prevent carelessness with matches, to avoid the use of inflammable cleaning fluids, to stop the misuse of kerosene lamps, gas stoves and flatirons, to avoid the piling up of oily rags and clothing, and to be vigilant for excessive wear of electrical wires.³⁸ Similarly, housewives were responsible for preventing home falls. Most speakers who discussed falls at NSC Congresses were not "experts" in either human behavior or in construction and design, and made recommendations that followed commonsensical principles. Women were advised to adopt good managerial practices, keeping rugs from slippery surfaces, removing toys from walkways, and providing for good lighting. Speakers frequently recommended that a good small stepladder be available in the home.

Fire and falls were familiar dangers, but in the teens and 1920s the increasing utilization of electrical and gas appliances by middle-class homes presented new dangers and aroused new fears.³⁹ Electricity and gas, similar to systems like water works and sewerage, were linked to networks outside the home. Such connections were often thought to be hazardous or a "source of danger." Americans feared gas and electric lines not only because of their fire potential but also because "they suspected that they emitted noxious fumes or rays."⁴⁰ Initially, many housewives viewed electricity and gas with "fear and trembling," and worried about electrocution.⁴¹

Technologists and engineers in the first decades of the century doubted female technical capacity, believing that women needed to undergo a series of learning stages before they could comprehend the new systems and their hazards. Electrical journals pictured women as incapable of comprehending or appreciating the new energy source. "Endless stories of women's unpreparedness and incapacity in a world of technical expertise," writes Carolyn Martin, "time and again demonstrated the reassuring conclusion that women would always depend on male prowess to conquer the world for them." Women who had attained technological knowledge and power were held to have gone astray. Schools, as Mark Rose shows, reinforced gender boundaries by teaching men the techniques of appliance repair while women learned gas cooking and electric sewing. Women

might use the new technological devices, but only men could be relied upon to contain their potential hazards.⁴²

As electricity and appliances cheapened in price and became more commonplace, the desire of manufacturers to develop mass markets forced a reconceptualization of women's technological skills. Housewives had to become knowledgeable about electricity if they were to avoid shocks and other electrical accidents. It was incumbent on the housewife to become an "amateur electrician," with an understanding of "the proper care of electrical household appliances," and not be dependent on the "experts" for all contingencies.⁴³ Education was one way to acquire such knowledge. *Good Housekeeping Magazine*, for instance, published a number of articles on the "ABC of electricity for housekeepers," as well as furnishing bulletins and sponsoring courses in the schools to instruct "women in the proper and the safe use and care of appliances and equipment in their home."⁴⁴ In addition, the magazine established the Good Housekeeping Institute to test and approve electrical appliances. Schools at the secondary level in cities such as Denver and Kansas City also began to include instruction in the use and even repair of electrical and gas appliances in their curriculum.⁴⁵

But would education alone be sufficient to reduce home accidents involving electricity? Public utilities were anxious to emphasize electricity's inherent safety in order to increase its use and to stimulate the purchase of appliances.⁴⁶ As early as 1905, Henry L. Doherty of Denver Gas & Electric was recruiting and training women as "home service agents" to demonstrate appliance operation to housewives and to assuage their fears.⁴⁷ In the 1920s, the National Electric Light Association, the public utility industry's trade association, created a "Women's Committee" and an "Accident Prevention Committee" to forward "Safety work for women in the electrical industry." The so-called "utility women" were expected to "inform themselves on the use of electricity in the home, the best methods of rendering service and courtesy to the customer, and . . . [to train] themselves in safety practice." By 1930, the nation's utilities operated 400 "home service departments."⁴⁸

Throughout the 1920s, electrical utilities touted the safety of electrical appliances, especially as compared with past energy and lighting technologies. They especially emphasized the manner in which they would end the drudgery of housework and provide increased standards of cleanliness and health in the home.⁴⁹ In the 1920s, electrification of the domestic market accelerated, as electrical utilities and corporations such as General Electric and Westinghouse developed their appliance lines.⁵⁰ Devices such as electric ranges, refrigerators, and radios now joined the irons, fans and vacuum cleaners that had been available before World War I. Electricity, promised the industry's admen, was safe and liberating, fitting in well with modern society.⁵¹

Institutionalizing Household Risk

Society lavished much attention on promoting the adoption and safe use of electrical appliances compared to other important household dangers. The lead, of course, was taken by the utilities themselves, anxious to sell electrical power and appliances, as well as their trade associations. No comparable set of

businesses existed with a vested interest in advocating safety in regard to other household dangers such as falls, poisons, or deaths from firearms.⁵²

A lack of sources for funding research into the causes of home accidents and their amelioration, aside from those involving technologies such as electrical and gas appliances, was therefore a major problem. In the NSC, for instance, funding for accident prevention in various domains came from "section" membership. (A "section" represented a particular type of industry.) A few representatives of insurance companies and local and governmental safety groups that were concerned with home safety also held NSC membership, but they had limited influence. As Lew Palmer of the New York Equitable Life Assurance Company, an early promoter of home safety, acknowledged in 1930, the NSC had "not devised any practical revenue from the home safety side of accident prevention. It has to pay its own way. We can't take the money that we have coming from industry and turn it all over to home safety . . ." The lack of a constituency base to provide funding, Palmer later reflected, made home safety the "step-child of the safety movement."⁵³

In the late 1920s and the 1930s, however, the sheer numbers of home accidents, as well as automobile accidents, began to attract more attention. The statistical work conducted by the NSC and by various insurance companies played an important role in this development.⁵⁴ Beginning in 1921, because of the unreliability of public health accident statistics, the NSC began collecting its own numbers on public safety, such as automobile accidents, and on home accidents. It prepared a standard accident report form using data supplied by its local councils (there were chapters in about forty cities by 1921), and by local governments, especially from municipal and county coroners.⁵⁵ The local councils gathered daily statistics on all accidents, analyzed them to reveal causation, if possible, and then used the results for publicity purposes.⁵⁶ Beginning in 1927, the reporting of home accident statistics became a regular feature of the *National Safety News*. In 1929, when the NSC began publishing *Accident Facts*, home accident statistics received their own section.⁵⁷

Insurance companies also contributed to the improvement of the home accident statistical record. Before state and public health officials began to identify distinct home accidents, insurance companies had marked the home as a perilous place. By the late nineteenth century, insurance underwriting focused on three distinct areas: life contracts, fire contracts, and liability contracts. Generally, life insurance companies offered policies which insured individuals; fire underwriters insured property from fire losses (perhaps the most common of all accidents and among the most severe); and liability contracts developed in the late nineteenth century for use in industries, to protect employers and property owners from suits brought by injured workers and people injured on their premises.⁵⁸

Beginning about 1890, the Aetna Insurance Company began to undertake the underwriting of accident insurance. First it concentrated on industrial accidents, but in 1913 the Company began offering a policy that diverged dramatically from the traditional accident policies offered by life insurance companies. Rather than targeting individuals who might have an accident, this broad-based liability policy—"combined residence insurance"—protected policy holders from calamities of all sorts related to the home, be it water damage, explosion, glass breakage, or burglary.⁵⁹ The new policy reflected the company's belief that home

accidents represented a growth area. As the company's in-house publication, the *Aetna Agency Edition*, noted in 1913, "We only wish [the business man] were as safe as he feels [at home]. Not a day passes but we have it most unpleasantly brought to our attention that the home is no sure isle of safety."⁶⁰ In 1921, following Aetna's lead, New York's Metropolitan Life began offering an accident policy.

Insurance company campaigns in the 1920s clearly identified the home as a hazardous place, but aimed at middle-class men, especially businessmen and professionals, as likely sales targets for policies to protect themselves from risk. Often they specifically identified merchants, manufacturers, bankers, lawyers, and doctors as those most susceptible to "loss of income" from accidents and therefore in need of insurance. Metropolitan Life even discouraged agents from offering such policies to women or to members of the working class.⁶¹

Class and Ethnic Dimensions

Comments in the home safety literature suggest that many of those involved in the safety movement believed, as Zurrer had observed in 1930, that there was a class and ethnic basis to home accidents. That is, while accidents did occur in middle- and upper-class homes, their frequency was greater in working-class and immigrant homes. In explaining this phenomenon, home safety specialists sometimes maintained that it was more difficult to advance their message among immigrants and the working class. They often argued that the schools should be used to spread their safety message, giving students instruction in proper attitudes to bring home to inculcate their recalcitrant parents. In addition, students were often equipped with safety check lists, a ubiquitous feature of home safety campaigns. The NSC considered school safety instruction an important activity.⁶²

Speakers at the home safety sessions of the Safety Congresses, some representing middle-class women's clubs, often mentioned the poor and immigrants as responsible for a large number of accidents and also for maintaining secrecy about them.⁶³ Katherine Fisher, the Director of the Good Housekeeping Institute, expressed the belief that poor women were less receptive to the safety messages than were middle-class women:⁶⁴

Homes in which hazardous conditions are most frequently found are usually homes on "the other side of the tracks." These are the kind of homes in which it is most difficult to offset ignorance of hazardous conditions by teaching women through our safety educational work. Women in such homes . . . are not "exposed" to safety education . . . They are seldom members of women's clubs, parent-teachers' associations, or other community organizations, because they have little time and less inclination for the serious activities of such groups.

Other speakers, not necessarily all women, expressed similar sentiments, noting that most accidents occurred in the homes of immigrants or of the "poorly housed . . . people who are not easily reached in group life and [who] do not have . . . organizations that can be easily made accessible."⁶⁵

Speaking in 1929 at the Eighteenth National Safety Congress, Jane Addams of Hull House agreed that the poor and recent immigrants were most likely to

be accident victims: "I am sure if you will make an investigation," she commented, "the children of working mothers will be found to head the list of those maimed and injured and killed." Addams argued, however, in contrast to many safety experts at the time, that poor housing conditions, not poor management, produced home accidents—factors such as inadequate lighting, the lack of roof guards, and the absence of playgrounds, as well as the fact that women were required to work rather than care for their families. She called on the NSC to lead the drive to improve home safety in the same manner that it had reformed industrial safety, making three specific recommendations as a way to reach that goal: that corporations provide mothers' pensions so they could stay at home to guard their children; that construction companies build improved housing, with children's safety in mind; and that schools add safety education to domestic science classes.⁶⁶ On the eve of the Great Depression, only the last of these recommendations was taken seriously by the NSC membership.

Addams' suggestions, however, especially the first two, made clear the difference between an approach to home safety that focused on changing housewife behavior and one that emphasized structural and social change. Few in the organized safety movement understood, however, as Gertrude Zurrer commented at the depths of the Great Depression, that safety and health went hand in hand, and were vital parts of any public welfare work. "I don't know how we have been able to go so long without realizing this . . .," she lamented.⁶⁷

New Organizations Confront the Problem

Until approximately 1930, women's clubs on the local level were sporadically involved in the home safety movement. Considering their reform activities during the Progressive Period, their lack of a sustained involvement is surprising, especially in light of the emphasis on women's responsibility in the home.⁶⁸ The General Federation of Women's Clubs, formed in 1890, and with a membership of over a million members in affiliated clubs, was also uninvolved, even though it had standing committees on issues such as Home Economics and Public Health.⁶⁹ In 1929, however, speaking before the annual conference of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Arvilla Miller issued a clarion call for the Federation to join the safety campaign. Miller warned that home accident statistics demonstrated clearly that "the home as the haven of rest, security and protection against the stresses of the world outside" was fast disappearing. She maintained that study and organization were necessary to cope with the problem. Holding up the NSC, founded by "far-seeing men" to combat industrial accidents, as a model, she called upon the "women of America" to take similar action through their clubs against home accidents. Under Federation leadership, she maintained, a nationwide movement could begin, leading to the day "when every woman may rightfully lay claim to the title, *safety director in the home*."⁷⁰

In 1930, the Federation Board of Directors accepted the charge and proposed a home safety campaign that would use the state federations as the "medium" for action. The Federation president, Bettie M. Sippel, observed at the Federation's first Home Safety session in 1930 that the home accident problem was relevant to the organization "because we are home-makers who have a great responsibility in making homes accident-proof . . . [not because we are] citizens."⁷¹ In 1930,

the Federation launched a program in coordination with the U.S. Bureau of Standards and the NSC primarily aimed at "control of existing hazards." In order to determine correctly these dangers, state branches of the federation were to conduct surveys of home accidents in their states. The North Carolina survey, for instance, according to the president of that state's Federation chapter, Marie Land, brought sharply to their attention "the responsibility that rests on the shoulders of women for the elimination of home accidents."⁷² In 1933, "Safety in the Home" became a special committee of the Federation's Home Department, with Land as the first chairperson. No other surveys, however, appear to have been completed, and while Federation chapters launched home safety programs in several states and cities, the coordinated national program originally envisaged did not materialize. The Federation never became a major actor in the home accident field, as its attention was drawn off by the area of traffic safety.⁷³

The mid-1930s saw deaths from home accidents rise to unprecedented heights: in 1935 there were approximately 32,000; in 1936, 38,500 (the NSC calculated that about 4,000 deaths were due to extreme heat); and 32,000 in 1937. Numbers of deaths from home accidents were usually very close to those from automobile accidents. Yet, little concerted national attention was paid to home safety. Perceiving the vacuum, and seeing an opportunity to advance its organizational interests, in 1935 leaders of the Red Cross created a Home and Farm Accident Prevention Program. The program was to be based in the Red Cross's extensive network of local chapters and run by committees with wide community representation. The chapters were to focus on community education, home inspection and home service, and first aid instruction. Red Cross Vice Chairman James L. Fieser confidently predicted that by "attaining these objectives, the ultimate goal—the reduction of accidents—will be realized."⁷⁴

The Red Cross strategy to combat home accidents involved great amounts of publicity and education, but little research.⁷⁵ A "nation-wide Home Inspection Campaign" launched the program, and over 26 million home inspection forms, as well as window cards, were distributed in the schools. Within several months after the program had begun, 2,500 of the 3,710 Red Cross chapters had appointed a Home and Farm Accident Prevention Chairmen. Radio programs and newspaper articles on safety were sponsored, and "action pictures," showing home accident injuries, were published in the newspapers.⁷⁶ In 1935, Red Cross officials persuaded President Franklin D. Roosevelt to call a National Accident Conference, directed by Secretary of Commerce Daniel C. Roper, with Red Cross Director Admiral Cary T. Grayson as the presiding officer and first speaker.⁷⁷

Underlying the Red Cross strategy was a belief that people needed to be educated about risk in order to reduce accidents.⁷⁸ In his keynote address at the National Accident Conference in 1935, Grayson repeated the old behavioral argument—that the accident toll "was created and caused by people themselves, and the solution lay in self-education and self-discipline."⁷⁹ This strategy, as in earlier diagnoses of the home accident problem, of necessity involved the "homemaker" or the woman in the home. As Irma Gene Nevins, National Director of the Red Cross Accident Prevention Service wrote in 1947, "Prevention of accidents in the home is largely the responsibility of the homemaker—and much depends up-on [sic] her ability to keep the house in order and in good repair,"

as well as properly supervising children.⁸⁰ Thus, traditional ideas about home accident prevention involving changing people's behavior and women as home safety managers dominated the Red Cross strategy.

Through its widespread network of local chapters, the Red Cross distributed great quantities of accident prevention materials and sponsored many safety lectures and classes. But reports from the local chapters to the central headquarters indicated a widespread sense of frustration over lack of impact.⁸¹ By the late 1930s, the Red Cross was faced with the decision either to get out of the home accident field or alter its basic strategy. The option chosen was to modify the accident program and to combine it with the organization's successful First Aid and Water Safety Program, an action taken on July 1, 1939. In 1941, the Red Cross began offering formal classes in accident prevention, awarding certificates upon completion in a manner similar to those provided in first aid and water safety.⁸² This strategy appeared more satisfactory than the previous less structured approach, but Red Cross officials had been forced to realize that a victory over home accidents was, at best, slow and uncertain. Although it maintained its involvement in the home accident field, the Red Cross never dominated it in the manner that the leadership had originally expected.⁸³

Yet another organization, the American Public Health Association, also tentatively entered the home accident field in the late 1930s. Public health authorities played an increasing role in redefining the home accident field, moving from theories of "accident proneness" in the 1940s and 50s to concepts of "injury control" in the 1960s. Essentially, the latter (actually developed by William Haddon Jr., a physician who was first trained as an engineer and who became the first director of the National Highway Safety Bureau) focused on adjusting the environment to prevent injury rather than attempting to change behavior. It had its greatest effects in regard to automobile safety but also entered into the consumer realm in the 1950s. In 1940, however, only the glimmerings of the shift toward a public health perspective were visible.⁸⁴

Conclusion

As the nineteenth-century concept of the "home-as-haven" was replaced by the twentieth-century concept of "home-as-dangerous-place," society increasingly delegated responsibility for restoring the earlier state to the housewife. In doing so, however, it also had increasingly to grant housewives authority over their separate sphere. Such authority was reflected in the growth of the profession of home economics and the application of the concepts of efficiency and planning to the home. Although home economics was often linked to the dictates of the new consumer society that was attempting to sell products such as appliances to the housewife, it also contained the potential for empowerment by offering women both knowledge and increased control over their space and their time.

As noted earlier in the paper, Maureen Flanagan has argued that women in the Progressive Period extrapolated lessons about improving the larger urban environment from their attempts to make their home environments more livable. In the case of home accidents, however, society, as personified by organizations such as the NSC and the Red Cross, and even, perhaps, the General Federa-

tion of Women's Clubs, attempted to train women to restore and to protect the "livable" home rather than to crusade for the livable city. Thus, gender and risk perceptions helped structure considerations of accidents within the home environment, possibly limiting consideration of social dangers without. The home safety movement appears to reflect an inward extension of Robert H. Wiebe's "Search for Order." It also, however, delegated to women a responsible role in the home environment that was denied them in the outside urban world. In order to achieve such outside leadership positions, women had to grasp for them, only occasionally experiencing success.

Elite women involved in the General Federation of Women's Clubs understood the delegation, and previously quoted statements assume an added dimension when interpreted in this context. For instance, the statement of Federation President Bettie M. Sipple in 1930 that the organization took on the home accident problem "because we are home-makers who have a great responsibility in making homes accident-proof . . . [not because we are] citizens," made clear the separation of domains. Marie L. Land's admission in the same year that she felt shame at acknowledging that "we [women] have violated our intelligence . . . by a flagrant disregard of the rules of prudence . . . that we have been thoughtless and careless of those whom we are most anxious to guard and protect . . .," reflected her belief that home accidents represented a failure of responsibility by housewives—a responsibility they would have to accept to absolve themselves of blame.⁸⁵

Reducing home accidents, however, proved far more difficult to accomplish than safety experts expected. While industrial accidents sharply declined from the early century levels, home accidents remained high, averaging, as was pointed out above, about 30,000 per year from 1928–1940.⁸⁶ By 1940, safety experts recognized that the home was, in reality, still a "separate sphere," and that tactics that had successfully reduced industrial accidents would be less effective there.⁸⁷ While the home accident movement lacked adequate financing and a body of research, the problem was additionally complicated by the difficulty in breaching the home's sanctity and privacy and the sense of comfort and familiarity that people experienced there.⁸⁸ As one NSC safety congress speaker observed, "It is not the unusual condition or the new implement that brings about accidental injuries in or about . . . homes. It is the condition people have gotten accustomed to that causes the majority of accidents. . . ."⁸⁹ In short, society still regarded the home as a haven where the safeguards that they erected in the outside world of the street and the factory could be disregarded.⁹⁰ And, society still designated women as the responsible managers for controlling danger in the haven.

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ENDNOTES

This paper originated as part of a larger project on safety undertaken for Bill Luckin and Roger Cooter. A more extensive and detailed article will be published as "Women as Home Safety Managers: The Discovery of the Home as a Place of Risk and Danger, 1850–1940," in Roger Cooter and Bill Luckin (eds.), *Accidents, Fatalities and Social Relations:*

Historical Orientations in History, Wellcome Institute Series in the History of Medicine (Amsterdam: Rodopi), in press. The authors would like to thank Leslie Fisher, formerly of the New York State Department of Health, for sharing with us his manuscript, "Public Health Protection—Then and Now: Contributions of New York State Institutions to National Preventive Research, Service and Education for the Safety of Children." We would also like to thank John C. Burnham for his great helpfulness in sharing his ideas about accidents and accident prevention as well as providing many suggestions about sources. Baruch Fischhoff made helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Priscilla Massmann shared her knowledge of the archives of the General Federation of Women's Clubs with the authors, while archivists at the Federation, the Red Cross, and the National Archives have been most helpful in regard to sources.

1. See, Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger, An Analysis of Conceptions of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966); Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers* (Berkeley, CA., 1982); and Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory* (London, 1992), pp. 3–82. For a pioneering article on home safety see John C. Burnham, "How the Discovery of Accidental Childhood Poisoning Contributed to the Development of Environmentalism in the United States," *Environmental History Review* (Fall, 1995) 19:57–82.

2. Maureen A. Flanagan, "The City Profitable, The City Livable: Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," *Journal of Urban History* (January, 1996) 22:163–90; Marsha Wedell, *Elite Women and the Reform Impulse in Memphis, 1875–1915* (Knoxville, 1991), p. 96; and, Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana, 1991), p. 141.

3. Flanagan, "The City Profitable, The City Livable," pp. 164–5, 181. For the idea of the "culture of safety," see, Arwen P. Mohun, "Creating a Culture of Safety," paper delivered at the Hagley Museum and Library Conference on "Danger, Risk, and Safety: Ideas and Practices," Oct. 13, 1993. Professor Mohun, in her most suggestive paper, is looking at safety organizations and industrial safety.

4. Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800–1960* (Chapel Hill, 1986), p. 29. For other studies of the home see David P. Handlin, *The American Home: Architecture and Society 1815–1915* (Boston, 1979); Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, MA, 1985); Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago 1873–1913* (Chicago, 1980); and, Wright, *Building The Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, 1981).

5. Charles R. King, *Children's Health in America: A History* (New York, 1993), p. 47.

6. Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York, 1982), p. 185.

7. Nancy Tomes, "The Private Side of Public Health: Sanitary Science, Domestic Hygiene, and the Germ Theory, 1870–1900," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (Winter, 1990) 64:509–539. The quotation is on 528.

8. Harold U. Faulkner, *The Decline of Laissez Faire 1897–1917* (New York, 1951), p. 277. See, also, Arthur F. McEvoy, "Working Environments: Prospectus For An Ecological Study of Industrial Health and Safety," unpublished paper delivered at the 1991 Critical Problems Conference of the Society for the History of Technology, Madison, Wisconsin, Nov. 1, 1991, and the forthcoming book by Mark Aldrich, *SAFETY FIRST: Technology, Labor, and Business in the Building of Work Safety, 1870–1939* (Baltimore, 1996).

9. Randolph E. Bergstrom, *Courting Danger: Injury and Law in New York City, 1870–1910* (Ithaca, 1992), pp. 21–3, 158, 167–96.

10. The National Safety Council [hereafter NSC] was organized into sections, each representing a particular type of industry, and industry members funded that section's activities. Few industries represented the domestic sector, while insurance companies had limited influence within the NSC Executive Committee. NSC *Transactions*, Nineteenth Safety Congress (1930) 246–7.
11. Mohun, "Creating a Culture of Safety," p. 4.
12. "Report of the Home Safety Committee," *Proceedings of the National Safety Council* [henceforth, *Proceedings*], Detroit, 1916, pp. 30–32; "Universal Suffrage and Universal Safety," *Safety Engineering* (henceforth SE) (Mar., 1915) 29:222; and, "For 'The Man on the Job' At Home—Cause and Prevention of Household Accidents," SE (Feb., 1917) 33:103.
13. In 1914, at the NSC Third Safety Congress, Ida M. Tarbell addressed the "Economic Session" of the conference on safety, but paid attention almost entirely to men in industry. See, "Economics Session," *Proceedings*, Third Safety Congress (1914) 3: 119–25.
14. See, "Housewives and Home Hazards," SE (May, 1917) 33:303–3.
15. H. S. Forster, "Safety in the Home," *Proceedings*, Seventh Safety Congress (1918) 7:447–52.
16. "Women in Industry Section Invites National Women's Organizations to Cooperate in Public Safety," *National Safety News* [henceforth cited as NSN] (Dec. 1, 1919) No. 312, 1–2.
17. C.W. Price, "Safety a Part of Community Life," NSN (Dec. 1, 1919) No. 312, 3.
18. These ideas can be traced to the writings of Catharine Beecher. See, Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York, 1973); Strasser, *Never Done*, pp. 188–9.
19. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 210.
20. On this point see Glenna Matthews, *"Just a Housewife" The Rise & Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York, 1987), and Margaret W. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940* (Baltimore, 1982).
21. Matthews, *"Just a Housewife,"* Chapter 6, "The Housewife and the Home Economist," pp. 145 ff., especially pp. 152–8; Strasser, *Never Done*, p. 206; and Rossiter, *Women Scientists*, pp. 276–7.
22. Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890–1920* (Chicago, 1964), p. ix. See also, Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York, 1967).
23. On how technological change held out the promise of emancipation for women, see Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York, 1983).
24. Although few monographs have focused directly on the home economics movement, many excellent discussions of the movement exist. See, for instance, Matthews, *"Just a Housewife,"* Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America*; and, Strasser, *Never Done*.
25. David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), p. 252.

26. This was the seventh graduate fellowship in the field of safety education offered by the National Bureau of Casualty and Surety Underwriters. See announcement, "A Fellowship in Home Safety," in Papers of the Children's Bureau, National Archives; "Bureau Offers Fellowship in Home Safety," NSN (March, 1930) 21:26.
27. The fellowship was first announced in 1929 but there were few applicants.
28. For a discussion of Edith Abbot's career as an academic and a social reformer, see Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform 1890-1935* (New York, 1991), pp. 69-92.
29. See, Gertrude Zurrer, "The National Bureau's Study of Home Accidents," *Proceedings*, Nineteenth Safety Congress (1930) 19:232-7; see, also, Frances L. Swain, "Teaching Home Safety Through Good Home Management," *Proceedings*, Twentieth Safety Congress (1931) 20:182-6.
30. Daniel J. Walkowitz, "The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity: Social Workers in the 1920s," *American Historical Review* (Oct., 1990) 95:1051-75.
31. Strasser, *Never Done*, p. 212.
32. Bertha June Richardson, *The Woman Who Spends: A Study of Her Economic Function* (Boston, 1904). See also, Nye, *Electrifying America*, chapter 6.
33. Christine Frederick, *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home* (Chicago, 1920), p. 69; quoted from Strasser, *Never Done*, p. 214. See also, Christine Frederick, *The New Housekeeping: Efficiency Studies in Home Management* (Garden City, N.Y., 1913); and Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York, 1995), p. 155.
34. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America*, p. 259.
35. Matthews, "Just a Housewife," p. 153.
36. Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT, 1987).
37. Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolutions*, pp. 194-5.
38. Experts from the fire underwriters seldom spoke at National Safety Congresses and speakers there discussing fire appeared to be unaware of their research.
39. Cowan, *More Work For Mother*, pp. 66-70.
40. Handlin, *American Home*, p. 455.
41. C. H. Claudy, "Electrical Invasion of the Home," *Scientific American* (Dec. 2, 1916) 115:502-3; Mark H. Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat: Domesticating Gas and Electricity in Urban America* (University Park, PA, 1995), pp. 77, 86.
42. Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1988), pp. 22-31; Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat*, pp. 94-8; and, Strasser, *Never Done*, pp. 73-6.
43. Bertha Winter Mahoney, "As The Home Keeper Sees It," *Proceedings*, Sixteenth Safety Congress (1927) 16:138-40.
44. Katherine A. Fisher, "Making Household Equipment Safe to Use," *Proceedings*, Eigh-

teenth Safety Congress (1929) 18:300–6. Katherine Fisher was Director of the Good Housekeeping Institute and a frequent participant in NSC affairs.

45. Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat*, pp. 91–109.

46. Nye, *Electrifying America*, pp. 259–80; Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat*, pp. 107–9, 139–46; and, James A. Ryan, “Efficient Slaves of Intelligent Masters,” *NSN* (Oct., 1929) 20:116, 126. If the hazards of electricity were to be controlled, performance standards would also have to be established. The Bureau of Standards, created by Congress in 1901 to systematize and regularize national standards for use in science, engineering, manufacturing, commerce, and education, took the lead in this matter. Much of the Bureau’s work related to electricity and gas provision. In 1918, the Bureau issued Circular 75—“Safety in the Household”—prepared, according to the introduction, because of the increase in hazards “in modern times from the service of gas and electricity and the use of such dangerous articles as matches, volatile oils, poisons, and the like.”

47. Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat*, pp. 74–89.

48. Esther Rockey, “First Aid to Home Accidents,” *Proceedings*, Twentieth Safety Congress (1932) 20:186–90; Hoy, *Chasing Dirt*, p. 154.

49. Katherine Fisher, “Safety Begins at Home,” *Proceedings*, Twenty-Fourth Safety Congress (1935) 24:113; Zella Patterson, “The Safe Use and Care of Household Appliances,” *Proceedings*, Twenty-Seventh Safety Congress (1938) 27:145–47.

50. Nye, *Electrifying America*, pp. 266–77; Platt, *Electric City*, pp. 236–44.

51. See, Cowan, *More Work for Mother*, and Strasser, *Never Done*, pp. 78–84.

52. Concern over lead paint poisoning was just beginning. See Elizabeth Fee, “Public Health in Baltimore: Childhood Lead Poisoning, 1930–70,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* (1992) 87: 267–93; Jane S. Lin-Fu, “Lead Poisoning in Children,” *Children Health Service Publication No. 2108* (1970).

53. NSC, *Transactions*, Nineteenth Safety Congress (1930) 246–7; see, also, Palmer’s comments in “Report on the National Safety Council’s Special Committee on Home Safety,” in *Transactions*, Twenty-Eighth Safety Congress (1939) 133–5. The NSC came to be funded not only by member dues, but by contributions and the sale of materials. Today it also consults on safety matters.

54. For the NSC and statistics, see Frederick S. Crum, “How We Die from Accidents in Careless America,” *NSN* (Oct., 1912) 4: 17–8. See, also, Lucian W. Chaney, “The Need for More Definite Analysis of Accident Causes,” *Annals of the American Academy*, CCIII:40–5. See, also, John C. Burnham, “How the Discovery of Accidental Childhood Poisoning.”

55. “Report of the Statistical Committee,” *Proceedings*, Eighth Safety Congress (1919) 8:1004–7; Frederick S. Crum, “Report of Committee on Statistics,” *Proceedings*, Ninth Safety Congress (1920) 9:321–7; and, “To the Stranger in Our Midst,” *NSN* (Oct., 1921) 4:3.

56. “Outline of a Public Safety Plan,” *NSN* (Dec. 15, 1919) no. 314: 2,4; “What the Local Councils Did in 1921,” *NSN* (Oct., 1921) 4:25; and, Julian H. Harvey, “Organizing a Local Safety Council,” *Annals of the American Academy*, CXXIII:32–3. See also, Palmer, “Report of the NSC’s Special Committee on Home Safety,” *Transactions*, Twenty-Eighth Safety Congress (1939) 133–4.

57. Metropolitan Life Insurance and Travelers Life Insurance were the only two in-

surance companies to publish statistics on home accidents. See, *Proceeding of the First Conference on Home Accident Prevention* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1953), pp. 27, 58–60.

58. Life insurance companies sometimes offered liability coverage through specific divisions to comply with state laws which demanded that the capital of life and fire insurance policies be invested separately.

59. "Combination Residence Insurance," *The Aetna-Agency Edition* (June 1913) 2: 296. This policy did not cover loss by fire since there had long been a separation of business between fire and life insurance companies.

60. "Safe at Home," *The Aetna-Agency Edition* (February 1913) 5:231. By the 1910s, Aetna had paid over \$10 million in claims on its "Accident and Health Policy," "Aetna-ized," *The Aetna-Agency Edition* (April 1913) 2:265.

61. See, for instance, *The Accident and Health Monitor*, Number 14, March 11, 1922; Number 17, April 1, 1922; and, Number 68, July 21, 1923. Metropolitan Life and its social welfare programs are discussed in Marquis James, *The Metropolitan Life: A Study in Business Growth* (New York, 1947), and Angel Kwolek-Folland, "Gender, Self, and Work in the Life Insurance Industry, 1880–1930," in Ava Baron (ed.), *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca, NY, 1991).

62. "Children's Safety Saturday—A New Way to Reach A Community," *NSN* (Feb. 23, 1920) No. 324:1; "Home, Factory, Streets All Are Safer If Children Are Trained in Accident Prevention," *ibid.* (Nov. 8, 1920) 2:1; "How Cincinnati School Children Are Trained in Safety," *ibid.* (June, 1921) 3:21; William C. Knoelk, "The School's Responsibility for Home Safety," *Proceedings, Twenty-Fifth Safety Congress* (1936) 25:131–5; and, William Ralph Laporte, Charles Hewnry Hunt, and Floyd R. Eastwood, *Teaching Safety Education in Secondary Schools* (New York, 1942).

63. Karen J. Blair observes that "Clubs had always had limited sympathy for black and working-class women. . . . Club work often reflected nativist attitudes towards immigrants." See, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868–1914* (New York, 1980), pp. 108–11.

64. Katherine Fisher, "A Man's Job," *NSN* (1937) 36:40. Fisher also argued that men should get involved in home safety because "safety in the factory begins at home."

65. Fred Rosseland, "Getting the Women to Help in Better Home Safety," *Transactions, Fifteenth Safety Congress* (1926) 183–184, and E. Williams Corn, "Most Accidents Occur in Homes of Poorly Housed," *Ibid.*, p. 189; Bernice Neuberger, "Developing a Community Program for Home Safety," *Transactions, Sixteenth Safety Council* (1927) 131–2.

66. Jane Addams, "What Accidents Mean to the Community," *Transactions, Eighteenth Safety Congress* (1929) 295–8. Addams expressed surprise at the number of home accidents. For a discussion of the relationship between crowding and accidents see Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890–1930* (Urbana, 1994), pp. 28–9.

67. Gertrude Zurrer, "The Welfare Agencies and Home Safety," *Transactions, Twentieth Safety Congress* (1931) 192–4. Health Agencies did occasionally take safety into account. See, "Home Is a Dangerous Place," *Ohio Health News* (Jan. 15, 1931), 2. I am indebted to John Burnham for providing me with a copy of this article.

68. For the emergence of woman's clubs and their public roles, see Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist*; Scott, *Natural Allies*; and, Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 321–72.

69. The Federation had developed an interest in industrial safety in 1910, but did not focus on home safety until 1929. See, Mildred White Wells, *Unity and Diversity: The History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs* (Washington, 1953), p. 216.
70. Mrs. D. Edwin [Arvilla] Miller, "Home Safety in the Community," *NSN* (Oct., 1929) 20:93-4, 134. Italics added.
71. Mrs. Edward M. [Marie L.] Land, "Safety Program of the General Federation of Women's Clubs," *Transactions, Nineteenth Safety Congress* (1930) 237-40; "Club Women in Convention Study Home Safety," *NSN* (Aug., 1930) 22:50.
72. Land, "Safety Program," 238-9.
73. Mrs. Edward M. Land [Marie L.], "Report of Sub-Committee on Safety in the Home and School," General Federation of Women's Clubs, *Official Report, Fourteenth Biennial Council* (1931): 193-4. The Federation "was instrumental" in making available insurance policies to cover housewives. See, White, *Unity and Diversity*, p. 216.
74. Vice Chairman [James L. Fieser] to Staff members, "Status and Fall Plans of the Home and Farm Accident Prevention Program," G.I. Letter #12, Aug. 20, 1935, Red Cross Archives, Washington, D.C.
75. James L. Fieser to Staff Members, July 21, 1936, Red Cross Archives.
76. The Chairman [Cary T. Grayson] to Chapter Chairmen, Sept. 7, 1935, C.S. 625-H.H.-1, Red Cross Archives; American National Red Cross, "Home and Farm Accident Prevention," in *Annual Report* (1936): 103-4; and, Rosemary L. Lilie, "Home and Farm Accident Prevention in the Midwest," *Red Cross Courier* (April, 1936): 10, 27.
77. James L. Fieser to Daniel C. Roper, Nov. 26, 1935, Fieser to The President [FDR], Nov. 26, 1935, and Franklin D. Roosevelt to Fieser, Dec. 3, 1935, Red Cross Archives. In 1930, a White House Conference on Child Health and Protection was held, but home safety, as opposed to the safety movement, was not specifically mentioned. See, *White House Conference on Child Health and Protection* (New York, 1930), pp. 138, 254-5, 332.
78. "Home and Farm Accident Prevention: A New Nation-Wide Program Initiated by the Red Cross," *The Red Cross Courier* (Oct., 1935): 9.
79. Estelle Rebec and Gustave R. Gaedderet, "The History of the American National Red Cross, Vol. VII: The Development of First Aid, Life Saving, Water Safety and Accident Prevention" (Washington, D.C.: The American National Red Cross, 1950, unpublished), p. 97. In an internal memo to Chapter Chairman, Grayson noted that "hazards and bad habits" caused accidents. See, The Chairman [Cary T. Grayson] to Chapter Chairmen, Sept. 7, 1935, C.S. 625-H.H.-1, Red Cross Archives.
80. Irma Gene Nevins, "Is Your Home Free of Hazards," *Red Cross Courier* (May, 1947): 8.
81. The NSC had supposedly taken some satisfaction at the Red Cross' inability to mount an effective campaign against home accidents. John Melpolder, the Red Cross "Consultant" to the Program, reported that the NSC's attitude was, "There are a lot of agencies that dabble in this field, but they get out of it as soon as they've gotten some publicity out of it, and have done more harm than good." Melpolder to James L. Fieser, Sept. 11, 1937, Red Cross Archives.
82. John Melpolder, as head of the program in 1937, wrote to Fieser, "the Red Cross, by common consent, has preempted the home and farm accident prevention field. Now what are we going to do with it or, rather, in it?" However, he "retired" in 1939. See, John

Melpolder to Fieser, Nov. 18, 1937, and Norman H. Davis to Chapter Chairmen, Sept. 30, 1941, Red Cross Archives; "Accident Prevention and First Aid Consolidated," *The Red Cross Courier*, June, 1939.

83. Perhaps because of the Red Cross activity, the NSC created a special committee on Home Safety in 1937. However, the committee did little but review past actions and suggest extension of publicity, education, and cooperation with other organizations. See, Palmer, "Report of the NSC's Special Committee on Home Safety," *Transactions*, Twenty-Eighth Safety Congress (1939) 133–4.

84. See, John C. Burnham, "Why Did the Infants and Toddlers Die? Shifts in Americans' Ideas of Responsibility for Accidents—From Blaming Mom to Engineering," *Journal of Social History* (1996) 29:817–837; Julian A. Waller, "Reflections on a Half Century of Injury Control," *American Journal of Public Health* (April 1994) 84:664–70; Waller, "Injury Control in Perspective," *ibid.* (Mar., 1989) 79:272–3; and, Leslie Fisher, "Childhood Injuries—Causes, Preventive Theories and Case Studies: An Overview on the Role for Sanitarians and Other Health Professionals," *Journal of Environmental Health* (May/June, 1988) 50:355–360. The first conference on Home Accident Prevention was held in 1953. See, *Proceedings of The First Conference on Home Accident Prevention*.

85. Land, "Safety Program," 238.

86. The decline in industrial accidents was largely attributed to intensive safety campaigns, improvements in work conditions and medical care, adoption of protective devices for machinery, and a shorter work week, cutting the fatigue that was often a factor in industrial accidents. See, "Accident Deaths and Death Rates by Principal Types, 1913 to 1937," *Accident Facts*, 1938, p. 57; William Haddon, Jr., Edward A. Suchman, and David Klein, *Accident Research: Methods and Approaches* (New York, 1964), pp. 30–6. Deaths from motor vehicle accidents rose in absolute numbers, but actually declined by a measure of death rate per 100 million vehicle miles. Pedestrian deaths rose to a peak in 1937, but then steadily decreased thereafter.

87. Richard W. Thrush, "Home Safety Activities of Selected National Groups: The American Red Cross," *Proceedings*, Twenty-Ninth Safety Congress (1940) 29:183.

88. Here the comment of Admiral Cary T. Grayson, Red Cross National Chairman, to Mabel T. Boardman, the previous long-time Red Cross Chair, about the Red Cross Home and Highway Accident Program is of particular interest. Grayson approvingly reported that the new program would provide an "entree to the American home that has not otherwise been possible." See, Cary T. Grayson to Mabel T. Boardman, Sept. 14, 1935, Red Cross Archives.

89. Land, "Safety Program," 242; Knoelk, "The School's Responsibility," 131.

90. See, for instance, Paul Slovic, Baruch Fischhoff and Sarah Lichtenstein, "Facts and Fears: Understanding Perceived Risk," in R. C. Schwing and W. A. Albers, Jr. (eds.), *Societal Risk Assessment: How Safe is Safe Enough?* (New York, 1980), pp. 181–214.